

# cynthia byrnes

## contemporary art

### Dana Saulnier

b. 1958, Boston , MA

Painter Dana Saulnier creates a singular dialogue with the history of painting. Clues include a nominal subject matter encompassing Titian and DeKooning: the 'figure in landscape'. Significant also is Saulnier's constant practice of drawing. His work arises in drawing and he terms his color, a 'drawing palette'. It is through drawing that Saulnier has both worked out and transcended issues of appropriation so prevalent within his generation of artists. Superseding a program of referentiality, these mysterious images assimilate Saulnier's life experiences: from bearing witness to his most important relationships, to reflecting his dwelling upon a few acres of rural land full of color and form. Dana Saulnier finds emotional depth and humility weaving together themes of tragedy and comedy. Saulnier is represented in major public collections such as The Columbus Museum of Art and The Cincinnati Art Museum.

### Ethan Kolwaite

b. 1992, Worcester , MA

Using his whole body to paint and move about the canvas, abstract artist Ethan Kolwaite creates large-scale oil paintings as tall or taller than himself. Kolwaite's work is teeming with intriguing contradictions. Using vibrant color and a highly physical – almost performative – process, the artist reflects on dark, personal subject matter, such as death and mortality. Kolwaite's paintings stand as a foil against his process and even himself as the creator. His very lively method of creation, as well as his bright, playful color pallet notably contrast with his dark, contemplative subject matter. As Kolwaite grapples with somber subject matter larger than himself, his paintings seem to translate the artist's inner turmoil into an engaging visual experience.

### Eugene Brodsky

b. 1946, New York, NY

Walking in a strange city, taking snapshots surreptitiously at a screening of an old movie. Thumbing through endless books of architecture architects and plans on the wall of a construction shed in a garden. Going around the block because I'm early for an appointment. Browsing at a bookstall in Paris (with weirdly but inevitably the prototypical grey Parisian vendor chasing me down the street because somehow I have stolen what is his- though only the image itself). Finding a shred of a poster left hanging on a wall. Cracks and drips. Building paper from the remains of a previous piece. Old newspapers that I've saved for no reason at all. Sitting on the passengers side on an interminable drive from a to b. Walking in the snow. Doodling when I should be concentrating.

I ramble and look for what nobody else cares about and having collected my images I take them to my studio and rework, refine, reverse and repeat them so that they are hopefully born again with new dignity and magic. I try to use whatever techniques and materials I can lay my hands on that don't dominate what I want to see.

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Having grown up in a generation that had Rauschenberg and John's to refer to, I have the advantage (and disadvantage) of knowing everything is possible, anything can become art. I have used transfer, stencils and silkscreens to take my hand out of the work while at the same time keeping the element of chance and human fallibility. I try to stay alert to all that is going on and at the same time to follow my own two feet. I commented to my friend the other day that some people make work that looks brutally labor intensive and I seem to make work, which is very labor intensive but looks like it's just there.

### George Chaplin

b. 1931, Portland, ME

George Chaplin's paintings are abstract and based in color studies. A former student of Josef Albers at Yale University, Chaplin's color field paintings and pastels reflect an objectivity towards subject matter and an exploration of the capacity of color. Inspired by nature and the landscape, Chaplin seeks to convey the serenity and excitement of natural elements such as water and fire which he notes are always the same yet always moving. In his larger oil paintings, Chaplin uses a pallet knife to work and mix colors both on the pallet and on the canvas directly, creating a soft Ombre from one color to the next. Of his paintings, Critic Shirley Gonzales wrote that, "Although he runs through the spectrum of what we usually think of as warm and cool colors, none of Chaplin's colors are really cool...The color fills the room, vibrates, and seems to fluctuate as if moved by currents of air."

### Hugh O'Donnell

b. 1950, London, England

After moving from New York City to the Connecticut countryside, English-born artist, Hugh O'Donnell, became immersed in the rich greenery and natural phenomena of eastern Connecticut. Through his painting practice, O'Donnell explored this new environment by investigating the organic world around him, seeking insight into man's internal and environmental struggle for space and light – what O'Donnell refers to as his 'Green Age.' This Practice began with his large constructed paintings of the 1980's and laid the foundation for his later exploration of primary physical sensation of natural forces seen and felt in the growing world around us.

While O'Donnell's primary practice is centered in painting, he has adapted new technologies and tools when needed to see further into the visible world. One example of this is his commissioned mural sized digital print and installation multimedia artworks that he began in 1994.

O'Donnell has exhibited extensively in major institutions such as The Metropolitan Museum, NY; The Museum of Modern Art, NY; Tate Britain, London; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; and XLII Venice Biennale, Italy.

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### Jeanette Fintz

b. 1972, Chapel Hill, NC

Jeanette Fintz's paintings often are constructed from loosely systematic interactions of elements, roughly akin to a personalized musical score, that generate pattern and rhythm. For the past 12 years Fintz has been following established patterning systems stemming from geometric grids which she subjectifies to varying degrees, through selective ellipsis and overlapping of edges. Having been a landscape painter in her early career, her color is based on a love of nature and is a structural tool and less consciously and more profoundly, a vehicle for emotional expression. Fintz loves open framework linear music that allows one to follow counterpoint and overlap that create moments of contrast, conflict or blending. Her use of geometry, though strictly adhered to, often resolves into much more subjective visual journey revealing her inner state. Rhythm and repetition that had been apparent in her early landscapes and post cubist explorations manifest now as visual mantra, a process for harmonizing and unifying oneself with the greater universal whole.

Besides music, geometry and pattern, textiles and tiles have also been an inspiration. The Plaid paintings and the Malaysian paintings both reference textiles and landscape through transparent washes drips and loose grids. The Wordplay and Role-Play paintings are inspired by the hexagonal grid found in Islamic geometry and mosaics. Their divided surfaces display two ways of viewing the same unified field, creating unity in diversity. In the recent large Worldline Schreiber paintings, Fintz reduced the colors to only two, often blue and white, and line only, and overlap rather than contrast two geometric grids, creating ambiguity, conflict and harmony through the emphasis on linear entanglement. Planar edges dissolve and rearrange themselves referencing the fleeting karmic complexity of our lives, past, present and future, suggesting a subjective narrative through an objective means.

### Joe Wardwell

b. 1949, Brooklyn, NY

Wardwell's paintings integrate landscape, text, musical allusions, and abstraction to investigate myths about nature and national identity in the United States. Having grown up in predominately rural areas in the west, the artist's commitment to landscape is both personal and political. This commitment merges with his interest in the distinctly American art movement of the Hudson River School. Wardwell is immersed in the history of landscape painting in the United States and aims to bring our attention to how our relationship to landscape is historically linked to the defining of a national identity. From Emerson and Thoreau, to the early advocates of Manifest Destiny, to contemporary advertising – landscape and the American brand go hand in hand.

The landscape images that Wardwell uses inevitably allude to an end or irrevocable change in nature as we know it. It is impossible to see an image of a glacier today and only think of its beauty or sublimity. In our new century, this imagery implies an almost certain demise and the havoc caused by our heavy footprints. Where once images of glacier covered mountains evoked Heaven on earth and paved the way for humanity's dominance over the wilderness, it has come to pass that such images now signal the tragic consequences of this ideology. It is imperative that the US reshape its national identity in response to environmental depredation.

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The text fragments in Wardwell's work are all lyrics from rock songs taken out of their original context to suggest new meanings. Read through the lens of the US landscape, these lines illustrate an alternative American cultural consciousness. Inserting words into the scenes of nature juxtaposes imagery and text to undermine the previous heroic cultural connotations of American Landscape tradition.

### Kathryn Lynch

b. 1961, Philadelphia, PA

Abstract expressionist painter, Kathryn Lynch, is a proud, self-described simplist. Inspired by her regular walks through lower Manhattan and Shelter Island, Lynch is constantly observing her surroundings, depicting subjects such as landscapes, seascapes, people, dogs, flowers, cityscapes, and tugboats. Her compositions are moody and even childlike in their simplicity with her exuberant, loose brushwork and muted, even limited color palettes. Her landscapes are sparse and atmospheric, representing the artist's impression of the water at night or a fur-coat clad stranger against a flat white background. Rather than laboring over precise details, Lynch seeks to convey her darker impressions of her environment. She doesn't aim to paint pretty pictures, and instead endeavors to, 'express darker things or a philosophical view.' Lynch's straightforward, expressive paintings are the result of training and experience which allow her to capture the essence of something through sparsity and decisive brushstrokes.

### Kiyoshi Otsuka

b. 1944, Gunma Prefecture, Japan - d. 2020, Norwalk, CT

Born in Gumman Prefecture, Japan, Kiyoshi Otsuka creates bold, abstract paintings which seek to portray the beauty and power of nature and our connection to the natural world. Inspired by the New York Botanical Gardens, Otsuka's organic aesthetic is significantly informed by natural elements, particularly water. Working predominantly in acrylic, his aesthetic is informed by the liquidity of the medium. Through controlled gesture, Otsuka creates organic, multilayered, curvilinear compositions often comprised of carefully applied drip patterns. He states, 'I recycle my own 'ancient' paintings and these layers of experience meet with the immediate act of painting to accomplish deep color and space, and a tangible impression of natural form.'

### Lauren Seiden

b. 1981, New York, NY

Painter and sculptor, Lauren Seiden reinterprets the fundamental materiality of paper and graphite to create sculptural works on paper which challenge preconceived notions drawing. Beginning by wetting down the paper, Seiden molds the sheet into a structural form- allowing the material to dictate the form of the folds and crests before wrapping the paper around the stretcher – similar to a traditional painted canvas. Once dry, she proceeds to laboriously layer hand-drawn graphite atop the surface creating either solid, lustrous gray works resembling crumpled metal or more restrained applications which give the pieces the impression of carved marble. Seiden's simple, dynamic works on paper serve as an unintentional counter-balance to sensationalist digital art through her deep exploration of the essential materiality of drawing.

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### Liz Dexheimer

b. 1960, New York, NY

Painter and printmaker Liz Dexheimer layers vivid colors, bold patterns and expressive line to create elegant, ornamental panels and works on paper. Dexheimer's dense, playful compositions are tightly structured with free-flowing, gestural marks. Her imagery, informed by both the linear and fluid elements of wetland environments and the dynamic energy of the human form, conveys both a sense of play and serenity. The push-pull between the ephemeral and the enduring, between motion and stillness, plays a central role in Dexheimer's work.

### Luc Leestemaker

b. 1957, Hilversum, Netherlands – d. 2012, Los Angeles, CA

Dutch born painter, Luc Leestemaker is recognized for his atmospheric landscapes and vivid abstractions. The grandson and great-grandson of royal court painters, Leestemaker drew inspiration from Abstract Expressionists such as Mark Rothko and from 18th-century Dutch and English landscape painters such as Salomen van Ruysdael and John Constable. In his large canvases, Leestemaker creates a luminous, sculptural quality to the surface – similar to that of traditional oil painting – by employing a fresco technique of combining cement and raw pigment into the ground then painting over with acrylics and finishing with an oil-based varnish. Using a pallet knife and oil paints, Leestemaker creates his smaller, 'inner landscapes,' to convey his own emotional state through, "the universally understood language of landscape painting.'

### Philippe Cheng

b. 1961, Queens, NY

Photographer, Phillippe Cheng, interprets the landscapes of Long Island as soft, colorful abstractions, rejecting precision and detail in favor of color and emotion. Cheng seeks to communicate the emotion inspired by a type of place rather than document a particular location, Cheng deliberately shifts the focus plane to blur and distort the image until the landscape is reduced to soft washes of color. In doing so he encourages viewers to slow down and consider what they are looking at and explore their personal associations with the suggested environment. Cheng asserts that for him, 'it's about pacing and putting in place a visual pause, which would engage the viewer, hopefully, and open up another kind of avenue of thought. Maybe not knowing exactly what a place was or exactly what you're looking at would force you to try to identify that, and by that very nature of that process, you'd slow down.'

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### Rachelle Krieger

b. 1967, Queens, NY

Rachelle Krieger is a New York based abstract expressionist painter and printmaker known for her extensive exploration of the landscape and natural phenomena such as electricity, light waves and wind patterns. Working in acrylic, watercolor, and oil on either wooden board or raw linen, Krieger experiments with texture and color to create complexly layered compositions animated by bold brushstrokes. On occasion, Krieger's connection to nature brought her procession beyond the studio as she experimented with complete oil compositions en plein air, go so far as to tie the canvas to the easel to keep it from blowing away. In doing so, Krieger seeks to imbue the excitement and spontaneity of the outdoors into her work.

### Tracey Adams

b. 1954, Los Angeles, CA

I am drawn to intersections: ideas that seem to be at opposite ends of a continuum, like the organic and the geometric. My starting points vary: they come from something personal, a glimpse from an experience or a piece of music.

As a graduate student, I spent a lot of time around John Cage; his early influence, to this day, informs my studio practice of intention and chance. Music is present within my work, in terms of the visual intervals and the patterns that appear. I am interested in the physical engagement that creates a sense of performance while I am creating.

My works attempt to create environments that I want to find in myself: they represent internal worlds that I am attempting to externalize. My pieces are quiet, and are meant to express a form of serenity. It has to do with the feeling of calm, inside and out. I love what the late jazz musician Charlie Haden said: "The artist's job is to bring beauty into a conflicted world."

Each work and series is a diary of my explorations. My ideas evolve as I apply my intellect, my sense of order and play to the images with my materials at hand. I start with a kernel of an idea in mind, but somewhere between intention and chance I find new energies and new directions. I try to stay in the moment as I work and let the work surprise me. I'm never quite sure how a painting will look until it's finished.

### Zemma Mastin White

b. 1976, Houston, TX

Painter and printmaker Zemma Mastin White approaches her work from a formalist perspective to explore the relationships between shapes and colors for their own sake rather than for what they may represent. Using mixed media, such as Flashe and acrylic paint, Cray-Pas, graphite, and paint markers Mastin White layers line, color, and forms to create different patterns and textures through layers of mark making. In particular, she is influenced by urban grid patterns such as subway grates, skeletons of trees, and even the streets and buildings themselves. This attention to the texture and order of urban spaces is reflected in her work, both their grid-like compositions, cacophonous patterns, and muted color palettes.